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FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2636

INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 002599

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/05/2017

TAGS: PGOV PREL UN I2

SUBJECT: PM POLITICAL ADVISOR COMMENTS ON TAWAFUQ, UNAMI

Classified By: Classified by Political Counselor Matt Tueller for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

TAWAFUQ WITHDRAWAL

¶11. (C) On August 4, Ambassador Sadiq al-Rikabi, Prime Minister Maliki's Political Advisor, said that Maliki had not yet received resignation letters from any of the six Tawafuq ministers quitting the cabinet. Once the letters arrive, Maliki will refuse to accept them (thereby playing for time while keeping the door open to reconciliation). Moreover, in lieu of recruiting new ministers to fill the Tawafuq vacancies, Maliki plans to ask some of his remaining ministers to cover the gap by doubling up portfolios (the idea being that such a move is easily reversible should Tawafuq change its mind). In addition, Rikabi said that Maliki has assured at least two of the Tawafuq ministers that they are welcome to return to his government &at any time.⁸ Ambassador Sadiq advised that the U.S. needs to deliver a clear message to the Tawafuq leadership that "the political process must go forward, that we are not going to stop the political process - it will not turn back." Deputy PolCounselor assured Ambassador Sadiq that we had told Tawafuq many times that walking away from the political process would neither help them nor the U.S.

BORDER SECURITY WORKING GROUP

¶12. (C) Turning to the Border Security Working Group scheduled to be held August 8-9 in Damascus, Ambassador Sadiq said that "to be honest, I don't have much hope for this meeting. The problem is not the border security, but Damascus's unhelpful attitude." Deputy PolCounselor pressed for the GOI to request observer status for the U.S. at the working group (NB) We understand that Syria has since agreed to accord P-5 states observer status).

UNAMI REVISED MANDATE

¶13. (C) Ambassador Sadiq expressed concern that the Prime Minister's office (PMO) was not in the loop on the draft UNSCR to expand UNAMI's mandate. "We have a problem with internal communication," he admitted, explaining that the MFA does not coordinate very well with the PMO. He said GOI leaders had bitter memories of UNAMI's mishandling of the first quarter human rights report and were therefore skeptical of granting UNAMI a broader political role. He added that "UNAMI has very clear Sunni bias." Ambassador Sadiq re-iterated that the GOI wants neither a Muslim nor an Arab as new SRSG, because "such an individual will never overcome the perception of prejudice, regardless of their personal strengths or neutrality."

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